



# Segue Institute for Learning

Where ALL Students are "AT PROMISE"

325 Cowden Street – Central Falls, RI – 02863

Phone – (401) 721-0964 \* Fax – (401) 721-0984 \* Website – SegueIFL.org

Angelo Garcia – Founder/Head of School

## Board of Directors Meeting Minutes

Monday, February 10, 2014

5:30 – 7:00 PM

### **Call to Order**

Mr. Cohen called the meeting to order at 6:04 p.m. and established there was a quorum.

### **Roll Call**

Mr. Cohen called each board member, the following members were present:

Ms. Tabitha Elefsiades, Ms. Lucy Rios, Ms. Maggie Rivera, Mrs. Lauren Schechtman, Mrs. Nelly Hoffens-Vargas and Mr. Jesse Cohen. Segue staff present: Mr. Angelo Garcia, Mrs. Ann Manocchio, Ms. Ashley Swanson, Mr. Ben Messori, Ms. Sarah Girard, Mrs. Melissa Lourenco and Ms. Grace Rivera. Also present was Mr. Matt Plain, Esq.

Members Absent: Mrs. Jessica Brown, Mr. Marc Harrison, Mrs. Tia Ristaino-Siegel, Mr. James Setaro and Mr. Jeffrey Wentzell.

### **Approval of Meeting Minutes**

Meeting Minutes for December 2, 2013

Motion to Approve Minutes by: Lucy Rios

Second by: Tabitha Elefsiades

There being no opposition, minutes for December 2, 2013 were approved by the full board.

Meeting Minutes for January 13, 2014

Ms. Rios indicated that these minutes need one edit in the last page where the next meeting date is indicated should say February 10, 2014. Ms. Rivera made a note to edit this portion of the minutes.

Motion to Approve Minutes as edited by: Nelly Hoffens-Vargas

Second by: Lauren Schechtman

There being no opposition or further edits, minutes for January 13, 2014 were approved by the full board.

### **Reports and Presentations**

- Head of School

Academics – Segue students had a 100% completion on their portfolios this past month. All students who were instructed to do additional work have brought up to date their portfolio status. Work is being completed for the end of the month deadline. Scholars are continuing to take part in innovational interventions such as Power Hour, Food for Thought and Weekend Warriors, were they receive additional academic supports from teaching staff. These interventions occur during the school day, after school and on Saturdays here at Segue. In collaboration with Segue's Board of Directors, a Grading Committee has been established where all content and grade areas are represented to look at grading practices for next school year.

Student Life – During January, Segue's basketball teams played with other schools and community groups. With the assistance of Mrs. Manocchio, girls and boys team members were able to use new uniforms. Coordinated by Ms. Blair, Segue scholars continue to take part in community service opportunities in local schools and other community based organizations to complete their portfolio requirements. Segue currently is offering new sessions in its After-school program. Activities include Nail Art, Boys and Girls Basketball, PhotoShop, Keyboarding, Arts and Crafts and Cru-Club. Students and Staff continue participating in Advisories each day for 30 minutes. Staff work with students on team building activities and strategies in small group settings. Advisories are grade specific and students and staff have discussions on issues such as bullying, self-esteem building and values clarification. Several of local high schools visited Segue such as BV Prep High School and RI Nurses Institute. These opportunities are made available for our graduating students. Students applying for the Jackie Walsh Performing Arts High school prepared their auditions which will take place in February.



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Parental Involvement – Learning opportunities continue with the RI Regional Adult Learning organization. ESL classes are offered to parents interested in learning basic English/Literacy skills. These classes were not offered during the month of January due to the vacancy of the PM Coordinator position. During the second week of January, Segue hosted Family Conferences. Parents and guardians were able to meet with teachers and staff for two half days and one day to discuss their student's progress and growth. Unfortunately, there was not much success in reaching certain families. Staff are currently looking into changing the schedule for these conferences for the next school year as well as what their purpose is. Lastly, parents continue to volunteer to assist in several activities and projects which include office support and outreach.

Segue Staff – Several Segue staff participated at the 4<sup>th</sup> Annual Rhode Island Middle Level Educators Conference held in Johnston. Staff presented on the RTI Initiative at Segue. Segue is very interested in co-sponsoring this conference next year. Staff also continued to work on Student Learning Objectives and using data to measure targets and benchmarks for their own professional practice. Furthermore, they have been working closely with Mrs. Lourenco and Mrs. Boulé on evaluations. Segue staff continues its professional development (had a full day of PD on January 17). Grading system, goal establishment for students and creating a culture of success were some of the topics discussed. Staff continue to work together to improve classroom practices during their Common Planning Time.

School Community – Segue's administration and board members attended the RIDE meeting to learn about NECAP release of scores and information. Discussion centered mostly on high school data but it was useful for Segue representatives to be present. Segue administration continue its work toward the school's charter modification request. In January, Mr. Garcia and Ms. Rivera have gathered letters of support from local politicians, educators and members of the community to support the request. No decision has been made by the Rhode Island Board of Education to grant us the opportunity to make our presentation. Segue has had an increase of long period absences by several students who for one reason or another have been out of school. Throughout the month of January, several students with their families took extended absences as part of their holiday break to visit other countries interrupting their instruction. Staff is currently looking into how to address this for the next school year.

Building Issues – Working with Mr. Rory Martin from Automatic Temperature Control (ATC) to get the work on the outside building units up and running. Communication with them as a vendor has increased tremendously. Work continues with expected completion by February 2014. The work for the lead abatement and painting for Segue buildings began in January. Project seems to be moving ahead of schedule. So far, clearance has been given on some areas where work has been performed. There continues to be communication issues with the Dome Construction Company in regard to roof repairs. A meeting was held with administration and the company's Manager where it was promised we would receive better service and responses, but we have not had any success in reaching them yet. Segue buildings continue to be utilized by outside entities such as Crusaders, St. Elizabeth Ann Seton and others.

- **Academics Committee**

Ms. Rios informed the board that the committee met in January to talk about the grading system. Mrs. Lourenco provided the latest report on assessment scores. Mrs. Lourenco will provide a more detailed report for the next board meeting.

- **Finance Committee**

The Finance Committee met on Monday, January 8 and February 3, 2014. Present were Mr. Cohen, Mrs. Ristaino-Siegel, Mr. Wentzell and Mrs. Manocchio. Next meeting is set for March 3, 2014. Committee met to go over bank reconciliation statements from December 2013 to February 13 at the January 8 meeting. Bank reconciliation statements through January 31, 2014 will be reviewed at the March 3 meeting. Payables and Receivables were reviewed throughout January 31, 2014. No new payables need to be reviewed since the January 8 meeting.

## **Review Quarter 2 Financial Report (October, November, December 2013)**

Segue is on track financially, albeit with a smaller cushion than in Fiscal / School Year 13. This is largely due to:



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**Heating Costs.** Heating costs appear to jump in December. The Annex Building relied on oil heat until the December oil-to-gas conversion. The last oil purchase was in April, 2013 and now with the conversion to gas, in addition to enhanced cost and energy efficiency, regular monthly gas expenditures are more predictable and more evenly distributed throughout the fiscal year, which will eventually smooth out the spikes of oil purchases and the valleys in between.

**Building Improvement Capitalization.** At the end of the fiscal year some building costs will be capitalized. Until that capitalization, Maintenance and Repairs expenses will appear higher than what their actual end-of-year recorded values will be.

**Year over Year Comparison.** Additionally, in response to inquiries regarding how revenues and expenses compare with prior years in any given month, Mrs. Manocchio plans to include a year over year comparison for the Quarter 3 Financial Statement.

## **Risk Management and Emergency Plan.**

Mrs. Manocchio and Mr. Wentzell are working to roll all finance/technology disaster plans into one comprehensive emergency management plan, in alignment with other emergency response plans already established and at the recommendation of the audit. Mrs. Manocchio will be coordinating with Mr. Miranda and Ms. Rivera in this process. Mr. Wentzell will present a comprehensive plan to the Finance Committee in March for a first review followed by a second review in April. If the Finance Committee endorses Mr. Wentzell's comprehensive emergency management plan it will be brought to the Board for a first review in April and a second review in May.

## **Building: Maintenance and Repairs.**

On January 21, 2014, water was discovered on the floor of the boiler room in the Annex Building. Automatic Temperature Controls (ATC) has been working on the problem and has addressed all major issues. Since then the heat appears to be better functioning. Costs for the repair will likely run between \$20,000 and \$60,000 with no final figure yet determined. Segue has filed an insurance claim (broker: E. F. Bishop, building insurer: Philadelphia, boiler insurer: Traveler's).

## **Building: Lead Abatement**

Segue has begun lead abatement work with the A-Team (actual name). Abatement in the Annex Building should be complete by the end of February, with work on the pool, stairwells, and first floor complete. Lead tests have been coming back clean. The largest project in the Annex Building is the gymnasium, which will be completed over the February school holiday. Abatement has begun in the Main Building second floor hallways. Eventual work will move into classrooms.

## **Building: Purchase and Sale**

Washington Trust is aware of the signed contract and that work has begun on the lead abatement. There is currently no date for the closing on the building. Mayor Diossa has signed another extension of the purchase and sales agreement. Timeline for signing on the loan is in the hands of the bank. Segue will need an attorney for the closing and the school will retain the same attorney used to facilitate the purchase of the Annex Building.

## **Building: Long Term Facility Needs**

Mr. Wentzell has proposed the development of a strategic physical plant plan, commencing with an inventory to plan for preventative maintenance. Mr. Wentzell and Ms. Ristaino-Siegel will provide proposals for how to begin this process.



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## **Building: Ongoing Banking Relationships**

Concurrently with the signing of the loan to finance the purchase of the Main Building, Segue will move almost all banking to Washington Trust. Because Washington Trust is not located proximately to Segue and there will be ongoing needs for small banking transactions, petty cash, etc., Segue will maintain a small checking account at Dexter Credit Union.

- **Personnel Committee**

Mrs. Schechtman informed the board that she read and made some recommendations for the Governance guide sent by RIDE. These will be forwarded to Ms. Rivera to send to Mr. Allsopp.

## *New Business*

### Board Executive Session:

Motion by Ms. Tabitha Elefsiades and seconded by Mrs. Lauren Schechtman that the board convene executive session pursuant to R.I.G.L. §42-46-5(a)(1), at 6:37 p.m. for

*Non-board members were asked to exit the conference room at this time.*

- Executive Session pursuant to R.I.G.L. §42-46-5(a)(1) – discussions of the job performance/character of a person or persons:
  - Discussions of Administration's recommendations to not renew nontenured teachers' contract for the 2014-15 school year.

For the record, all persons affected have been notified in advance in writing and advised that they may require that the discussion be held at an open meeting session.

Mr. Cohen gave the floor to Mr. Matt Plain, Esq., who for the record provides a housekeeping measure indicating that the non-certified employees were not included in the document. Once this was clarified, Mr. Plain explained to the Board the Teacher Tenure Act. He explains that although the discussions are in closed session, the actual voting needs to take place during open session. There are 34 employees who will be recommended and discussed for non-renewal during this session. He explains what would happen (regarding a board member being excluded from the vote) in special circumstances for instance the board member having a professional relationship with one of the employees being discussed. Once the discussions in closed session conclude, the minutes have to be sealed before opening the session again and proceeding with the vote.

After his explanation, Mr. Plain requests from the board any questions. Ms. Rios asked the question why the process has changed. Mr. Plain explains that due to the overwhelming amount of protocols schools are required by law to uphold and that many of these were originally geared to regular public schools, new schools, charters in particular, once they identify they have to follow the law, they need to move forward and act upon it. Mr. Plain further explains the appeals process from the teacher's standpoint and the need for all board members to be present during that process in order to vote on it. Ms. Rios expresses her reservations as being from her point of view, not fair for staff but she does clarify that she will move forward and vote. Further discussion for clarification of who is considered a "tenured/no-tenured" teacher continues. Mr. Garcia explains that this has not been an easy process for any of the parties involved. But recognizing that although difficult it is necessary to follow and uphold as a function of management. Ms. Rios also asked if names of staff would be mentioned out loud when in open session. Mr. Plain explained that members would have list of employees (previously provided) and he wants members to look at the names but they will not be mentioned separately.

Motion to conclude Executive Session made by Mrs. Lauren Schechtman and seconded by Ms. Lucy Rios. Motion was unanimously approved by all board members present.

Motion to seal Executive Session minutes was made by Mrs. Lauren Schechtman and seconded by Mrs. Nelly Hoffens-Vargas. There been no opposition, motion was approved by all members of the board. The sealed minutes and vote taken



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during executive session if disclosure of such minutes/votes in open session would jeopardize any strategy, negotiation or investigation undertaken pursuant to discussions conducted under §42-46-5(a).

Motion by Ms. Lucy Rios and seconded by Mrs. Nelly Hoffens-Vargas to accept School Administration's recommendation to not renew nontenured teachers' contract for the 2014-15 school year, outlined in exhibit A as a slate of names.

As a point of order Mr. Garcia mentioned that the presentations of the letters of termination would be given to employees by the end of this week. Mr. Garcia and either of the co-chairs will sign the letters of non-tenured staff.

#### *RIDE Governance Handbook Review and Commentary*

Mr. Cohen mentioned board members should send directly to Ms. Rivera any edits or recommendations. She will forward them all to RIDE.

*Discussion/Vote to provide authority to effectuate the purchase and financing of the real property and improvements situated at 295-349 Cowden Street pursuant to resolutions outlined in the "Directors' Consent," attached hereto as Exhibit A.*

Motion made by Mr. Jesse Cohen and seconded by Ms. Lucy Rios. With no opposition, motion was passed by board members present.

Discussion/revision of By-laws is still in process and no vote will be made at this time.

*Diagnostic Screen Tool* – Mrs. Lourenco provided a copy of a letter sent to Mr. Garcia informing him that the Diagnostic Screen Tool is available in RIDEMap. This is the launch of the planning phase of Segue's participation in the school reform process. Segue is required to select and implement four school reform interventions and participate in quarterly monitoring with the Office of Transformation and Charter Schools. Segue is required to engage in the intensive process of data review and strategic planning. The closing date for Segue's input is April 30, 2014.

*Public Comment* – Mr. Garcia congratulated Mrs. Lourenco on soon receiving her principal's certificate.

#### *Adjournment* –

Motion to adjourn the meeting was made by Mr. Cohen and seconded by Ms. Rios. All members were in favor. Meeting adjourned at 7:45 p.m.

***Next Board Meeting is on Monday, March 10, 2014 at 5:30 p.m.***

Minutes approved by:

Minutes recorded by: \_\_\_\_\_  
Grace M. Rivera

\_\_\_\_\_  
Board Co-Chair

Approved on: March 10, 2014  
Date